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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000789

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STATE FOR PM/RSAT, EUR/RPM, EUR/UBI

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [NL](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: PARTICIPATION IN IRAQ COALITION

REF: STATE 54925

Classified By: CDA Chat Blakeman, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) The Dutch are not currently contributing troops to the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I). The Dutch military mission to Iraq ended in March 2005. The 1,100-strong military mission was part of the Iraq Stabilization Force (SFIR) and was stationed in the province of Al-Muthanna. Dutch in-country presence in MNF-I ended in July 2006 with the departure of a Dutch staff officer.

¶2. (C) It is highly unlikely the Dutch will resume contributions to MNF-I at this time. Politically, the previous and current governments headed by Prime Minister Balkenende support the international coalition's efforts in Iraq. Domestic support, however, for a Dutch military contribution in Iraq is extremely low. Opposition parties in parliament continue to make the argument that the Dutch government failed to provide relevant information to parliament in the run-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and that there was an insufficient mandate to justify the intervention. To date, Balkenende has successfully deflected calls for an inquiry into the Dutch decision-making process in support of the intervention in Iraq, despite persistent efforts by the opposition to force the issue.

¶3. (C) From a military standpoint, the Dutch government claims it cannot support any contributions in Iraq at this time due to its deployment to Uruzgan province as part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The Dutch government will make a decision this summer regarding a possible continued role in Afghanistan; questions of military equipment maintenance and sustainment will make a contributing -- but not a determining -- factor in this extension discussion. Some parliamentarians -- most recently the Defense Committee Chairman and member of the VVD (Liberal) Party Hans van Baalen -- have argued that the Dutch should do more in Iraq at the expense of its mission in Afghanistan -- but this is predominantly the minority opinion.

¶4. (C) The Dutch participate in the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I), with currently eight personnel deployed in support of that mission. The Dutch take NTM-I very seriously, and have expressed concern that there is ebbing interest at NATO for the mission as it enters a less personnel-intensive mentoring phase. The Dutch are very interested in mentoring, and would consider taking on an expanded role in that regard. RefTel points on NTM-I were well-received by the Dutch MFA, which has been the driving

force (vice the MOD) in the Dutch government to remain engaged.

¶5. (C) At the working level, Dutch officials have expressed interest in possibly participating in a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) in Iraq. This possibility, however, would follow the termination of the Dutch mission in Afghanistan, and would compete with other missions deemed important, such as a military deployment to Africa. Low Dutch public support would also be a determining factor in any future PRT participation.

BLAKEMAN